



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO HUMAN CASES OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN DANE COUNTY

(MADISON, August 17, 2005)—Today, state health officials announced that Dane County has two confirmed human cases of West Nile virus infection and they are urging people to continue to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

“We want people across the state to take steps to protect themselves from mosquitoes, which may carry disease,” said Dr. Patricia Fox, Chief Epidemiologist at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. “We are continuing our surveillance and urge people to use mosquito repellent, avoid being outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, and eliminate standing water around their homes.”

Both individuals who have confirmed cases of West Nile virus infection are residents of Dane County. One person developed a minor illness with headache and rash and was treated with ibuprofen. The second individual developed fever and chills and remains hospitalized with encephalitis, or swelling of the brain.

Although few mosquitoes are infected with West Nile virus, the best protection against the disease is to reduce the risk of mosquito bites. Some tips to minimize your exposure to mosquitoes when outdoors include:

- Use effective mosquito repellent and apply according to the label instructions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes.
- Avoid being outside during times of high mosquito activity, specifically around dawn and dusk.
- Keep window screens repaired so that mosquitoes cannot enter your home.
- Dispose of discarded tires, cans, or plastic containers left outside that may contain standing water.
- Drain standing water from pool or hot tub covers.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheel barrows when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths, pet dishes and wading pools every 3-4 days.
- Keep drains, ditches and culverts clean of trash and weeds so water will drain properly.
- Clean gutters to ensure they drain properly.

West Nile Virus is not transmitted person to person, and less than one percent of people bitten by a mosquito infected with West Nile virus will become seriously ill.

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Symptoms of infection usually appear between 3 to 15 days after being bitten by a mosquito infected with the virus. These symptoms can include headache, high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis and coma. People who become ill should contact their healthcare providers, who are urged to be looking for patients with symptoms consistent with West Nile virus infection.

Nationwide in 2005, 187 human cases have been reported in 22 states and three people have died. West Nile virus was first detected in Wisconsin birds during the summer of 2001. The first human cases in Wisconsin occurred in 2002, with 52 human cases and three deaths reported statewide. The number of human cases in Wisconsin dropped to 17 in 2003 with no deaths. In 2004, there were 12 human cases and three deaths.

The Department continues to conduct dead bird surveillance of crows, blue jays, and ravens.

**Dead birds should be reported to the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-800-433-1610
or to local health departments**

A positive bird test confirms that the virus is present in an area, but does not mean there is an imminent health risk to the community.

For more information about West Nile virus and surveillance activities in Wisconsin, visit:
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/WestNilevirus/>

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